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of sand carriers fully employed; half a dozen more, to their greater disgust, are given picks and sent to dig out the foundations of the new buildings, and of the remainder some are led to the site for the new huts and put to work to clean up the ground so that the foundations can be marked out, and others given the job of making and puddling mud for the replastering of the present mud buildings.

Now commences a period of unceasing activity on the part of the missionary. There are some seventy workmen employed in four different parts of the mission estate, and, except for the brickmakers who are paid a set price for every thousand bricks, each and every one of them is only too ready to steal away and fold his hands and close his eyes in repose as soon as the boss's back is turned. He, poor harassed man, has become the complete Poob-Bah of the building industry; he must act as architect, general contractor, storekeeper, clerk of works, foreman, timekeeper and cashier, and at the same time keep the mission running normally. He does not forget his priestly duties, and so he is up long before the dawn to say his Mass and have as much as possible of his Office said before he goes out at 6 a.m. to call the roll and start the men on their day's work. He returns to the house to bolt his breakfast, but before he has finished, there are half a dozen outside clamouring for attention. A wheel has come off a water cart, and the crew, never dreaming of putting it back themselves and finding a nail to hold it in place, but only too happy to have a legitimate excuse to sit down and do nothing, are doing just that. He slaps it back into place on the axle, secures it with a bolt and nut and scares the watermen into actually galloping off towards the river. A brickmaker has broken his mould and that requires a little carpentry and a few new screws. A digger complains that he can't find his shovel, is led firmly to the tool shed and falls over the missing article as he enters the doorway. A crowd of people has gathered at the back of the house and the number is increasing as more people come from the villages carrying poles or hanks of grass rope for sale. Each pole and hank has to be inspected, its value appraised and paid for on the spot.

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paid for on the spot. But the Reverend Pooh-Bah leaves them for the time being and goes off on the first tour of inspection. He meets the sand carriers on their way from the sand pit to the brickfield, and his suspicions are aroused by the easy and jaunty manner in which they are carrying the baskets which should be at least half full of sand. Examination of the first basket reveals just a couple of inches of sand in the bottom. The rest of the girls—for the sand carriers are ladies—don't wait to be inspected, but shrieking with laughter scamper off back to the sand pit where he follows them and ensures that they carry one legitimate load at least. Then having threatened the bearers with all kinds of penalties if they don't bring a proper load each time, he goes off to inspect the bricks. The moulders and their assistants are really putting their backs into it, for the more bricks they make, the more money they will earn, and already there are long double lines of newly made bricks stretching out in front of each man. In one case it is a matter of more haste, less speed, for yesterday's output belonging to one man has gaped and split in the hot sun, a sign that the mud has been badly mixed and the puddling has been scamped. These useless ones are rejected and the number deducted from the culprit's total. The missionary leaves the erring team vehemently arguing the matter among themselves, since a man from the hut-plastering squad comes along to tell him that they are held up for lack of water, and that the water carriers have been gone long enough to have made several journeys. He goes back to the house to get his bicycle, and ignoring the clamour that the pole and rope carriers set up at his appearance, speeds down to the river. The cart is there all right, half-way down the path, but there is no sign of the men who are supposed to be filling the drum. He spots one of them, almost hidden in the tall grass, engaged in washing himself, and a splashing a little further down reveals the presence of the other two happily employed in casting for mud fish. In a remarkably short space of time, however, they have the drum filled and are hastening back to the waiting plasterers, the irate Father grimly bringing up the rear.

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So he continues his tour of inspection, galvanizing the dilatory workers into fresh activity, and then returns to the house and commences the buying of the rope and roofing poles. That occupies the best part of an hour, and then, grown wise in the ways of these children of Nyikang, he makes sure that his purchases are put away, the poles on the flat roof of the house, the rope in a store-room where the wily Shilluk cannot filch them to re-sell them to him. Then it is time to make another round of the workmen, a procedure that he will carry out yet twice more during the morning and another three times during the afternoon. At 10.30 the morning's work is finished, and the labourers go home to reassemble at half-past two. There is no respite for Pooh-Bah, however. The affairs of the mission demand his attention, another group of rope sellers have gathered, the post-boat is due the next day, and he must write to Malakal for cement and to Kodok about the wood for the brick burning. He disposes of these tasks and also manages to find time to finish his Office before lunch. The afternoon's work is a repetition of the morning's; a continual tour of the different groups, the attending to the wants of one here and another one there, with one or two visits to the house to dispose of the rope and pole sellers.

Thus one day succeeds another, and week follows week and still the work goes on. By Christmas there are fifty thousand bricks ready for burning, the foundations of the new classrooms and the teacher's house are dug, the old mud huts have been replastered and the walls of the six new ones are already well above the ground, and everybody, Pooh-Bah by no means among the least, is heartily sick of the sight of mud, whether in its natural state, or made into bricks, or built into a wall, and is only too glad of the few days' respite the Festival brings. As soon as Christmas is over, the work begins on the kiln. The base, a rectangle twenty-five feet long and fifteen feet wide, must be built with care since it has to support the weight of thirty thousand bricks. It is three feet in height and is pierced by six triangular firing tunnels, each two feet wide at the base and two feet

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high at the apex. Its construction takes two bricklayers a full fortnight, and then another week is required to build up the bricks on the foundation, six men piling row upon row on edge in a herringbone pattern that leaves plenty of space for the flames to penetrate. Thirty thousand bricks are thus built up into a solid block some nine feet high, and the whole mass is plastered with mud to seal off all the cracks in the walls.

Meanwhile, the District Commissioner, who had promised to use his good offices in procuring sufficient wood for burning the bricks, has been as good as his word, and one day a steamer arrives bringing one hundred and fifty cubic metres of firewood. It looks a small pile when dumped on the shore, but its transport to the brickfield presents a formidable problem when the only wheeled vehicle available is a rickety handcart. Yet if it isn't moved soon, its transport will present no problem at all; the Shilluk will see to that. Fortunately the District Commissioner solves that difficulty too, for he arrives by lorry shortly after the wood, and kindly gives the harassed priest the loan of truck and driver to bring the wood from the river. A strenuous day's work sees the job done and the wood neatly stacked in two piles, one on each side of the kiln.

It is now the end of January. The brickmakers are well into the second fifty thousand bricks, the walls of the six new huts are finished and the construction of the roofs is well in hand. Grass rope is still required, but the number of roofing poles required is now complete and the demand now is for millet stalks. Women come in from the fields bearing huge bundles of them on their heads, and wait patiently until busy Pooh-Bah has time to attend to them. The swamps are emptying rapidly with the fall of the river and in another month the grass will be drying out ready for cutting. The work is going well and is keeping up to the time-table, but all this has not been accomplished in complete harmony and smoothness. The same relentless vigilance has to be kept up day after day to keep the indolent up to scratch; disputes break out among the workmen and often sounds of strife at

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one end of the compound bring Pooh-Bah hurrying from the other to add those of peacemaker and judge to his other rôles. Workmen tire of their particular jobs (water carrying is particularly hated) and demand another one. The water-carrying difficulty is not solved until a roster is formed so that everyone except the lordly brickmakers and bricklayers take their turn. Hoes begin to disappear, but that little pastime is effectively put an end to by stopping the price out of the wages of every individual in the squad concerned. After the second one disappears it is found to be too expensive.

Now it is time to fire the kiln. The six tunnels are roughly bricked up on one side and filled with firewood and straw from the other. The fires are lighted at dusk, and once they are kindled must not be allowed to go out until the firing is completed. Soon each fire is blazing merrily, and the draught forcing the fire back through the mass of dry wood and straw quickly turns each tunnel into a roaring cavern of flame. The kiln presents a grand spectacle in the darkness, as great tongues of fire lick out from the openings and billows of smoke from the wood and clouds of steam from the still drying bricks envelop the whole structure. The firing continues on one side for two nights and two days; then that side is bricked up and the other side opened and the process for firing continued for a like period. The interiors of the tunnels are before long glowing white-hot masses of fused brick, and the kiln soon becomes fiercely hot as the flames mount up, searching through each crack and cranny to reach the top of the mass. When the firing is completed, the tunnels are blocked up again, any cracks that have appeared in the walls are plastered over anew and the mass is left to cool down, a process that takes about a week. By now there are sufficient bricks to commence the second kiln and this is built in the same manner as the first. But the priest has noted with concern that the firing of the kiln has consumed far more wood than he had anticipated. The strong north wind which now blows with full force every day has helped on the fires more enthusiastically than he would have liked. He cannot go to the expense of getting more wood from Kodok, and the

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everything has gone wonderfully well, but now a serious misfortune occurs. The schoolboys too have been roped in to assist in cutting and collecting some of the great quantity of grass that is required for the thatching, and as a result of their labours about three hundred and fifty heads of grass are standing in the field near the river waiting to be transported to the building sites. One bright and too breezy morning two small boys, a couple of miles north of the mission, light a small fire to cook some fish that they have caught, the north wind scatters the fire among the tall, tinder-like grass and before anyone in the mission is aware of what has happened, a great mass of fire comes sweeping and roaring down, not on the mission itself, which is not in the direct path of the flames, but on the field of cut grass and the mission garden by the river. It happens to be Good Friday when the building operations have been suspended and no outside help is available. Two priests, a few mission employees and a handful of schoolboys attempt to rescue the grass and save the garden, but without success. The grass is destroyed and although the garden itself is protected by fire lines, the fierce heat so scorches the fruit trees and vegetable beds as to deprive the mission of vegetables for the next few months and of fruit for the remainder of the year. The fire is stopped only by the steep grassless bank of the path, but even so, it manages to reach out and burn several of the fine trees that line the path. One pious Sister consolingly reminds poor blackened Pooh-Bah, now turned fire-fighter, that such incidents are the 'poetry of the missionary life'. Such a mishap is not a complete disaster, however. It means that more grass must be bought from the villagers and the roofing of some of the huts will be delayed, but the rest of the work goes on as before. Not quite as before perhaps, for now it is March, and the programme is frequently interrupted by fishing days. These are the Shilluk equivalent of Bank Holidays and the missionary must be resigned to one or perhaps two days a week of idleness while the fishing lasts. However, he has no cause for anxiety. The second kiln has been successfully fired and the third is nearing completion

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and can be burnt in a few days, one section of the convent wall has been rebuilt and the second started, the walls of the new brick buildings are rising and the thatching is going on as fast as grass can be obtained.

But yet another verse of missionary 'poetry' has to be written. The third and last kiln has been fired and during the first night and day all goes well. During the second night of the firing, however, the faithless tenders of the fires desert their posts to slumber and sleep during the night watches. The fires burn low and die out. In the morning the sleepers awake and try frantically to re-light the fires before their negligence is discovered and also before the kiln is spoiled. But they are too late on both counts. They are caught in the act by an angry Pooh-Bah who on his way to say Mass has noticed the lack of light and activity around the kiln. The fires are rekindled and the firing continues in the hope of saving the kiln, but the damage has been done. Most of the bricks are poor yellow specimens that crumble at a touch, and the kiln has to be written off as a loss. The unworthy servants are removed with ignominy from their stewardship. Still, despite this calamity, the work is able to go on. With the two kilns already burned and the reserve from the previous year there are sufficient bricks to complete the jobs on hand, although there is no margin left for any emergency that might arise and no reserve for the following year. By the end of April one or two warning showers have fallen just to let one know that the rains are on the way. But the programme is almost completed. The Sisters are safe and secure behind a stout new wall, the walls of the classrooms and house are up and roofs are on and doors and windows are being fitted. The thatching is done and all the huts both old and new are tight and sound to withstand whatever storms the rainy season may bring.

Pooh-Bah stretches and yawns mightily, and then turns to his sadly neglected desk. He is well satisfied with what has been achieved, and his building troubles are over for another year.

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731 widespread, few have a sufficiency and fewer have any to spare for sale. Then the plight of the Shilluk is pitiful indeed.

Such a disaster occurred in 1945. The rains were sparse all over the country and failed almost entirely in the Upper Nile Province. In the Detwok area, after a promising start a prolonged drought set in and the young shoots withered and died. Hope revived when a heavy downpour of rain broke the drought and the people went out to plant again. But this second planting suffered the same fate as the first and as one scorching day followed another during the remainder of what was supposed to be the rainy season expectation slowly died, together with the wilting crops. The ruin was complete and, as we soon learned, was confined not merely to our own area or even to the Upper Nile but was general throughout the country.

797 731 461 In Detwok we were planning to open a Central School the following year and consequently had in hand a larger building programme than usual. The famine assured us of no scarcity of labour. Usually even though the crops are meagre there is no shortage in the months immediately following the harvest, and the Shilluk, careless for the future, gives himself over to the enjoyment of the fruits of his industry. Much of his precious grain is converted into beer [574 585] and he dispenses and receives lavish hospitality at the many village dances with which the Shilluk celebrates the harvest. Not unnaturally the proposal that he should spend the next few months digging foundations or brickmaking or carrying water is received with a marked lack of enthusiasm, and we usually depend for our labour upon those improvident bachelors who have not bothered about a cultivation and who moreover are faced with the necessity of raising money to pay the annual poll tax.

731 797 466 This year, however, there was no need to be anxious about a shortage of workmen. Each Monday when the labourers were hired for the week the mission was besieged from before dawn by hundreds of men and women begging for a chance to be able to earn a few shillings. We were able to employ only a fraction of this crowd, and it was a thankless and an

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unhappy task to try to choose fairly so that, if not every individual, at least every village should be given a turn. It was an even more difficult and unhappy task to send the disappointed ones away; to turn a deaf ear to their pleadings; to close one's eyes to the mute appeal in theirs.

But in actual fact the ones who worked were little better off than those who didn't, for although they had a little money there was no grain to buy. In view of the opening of the new school we had been forming a reserve of grain, but the scheme had to be abandoned in the face of such complete shortage. We doled out what we had and by dint of careful and stringent rationing we were able to keep about twenty families, I will not say 'fed', but at least from starvation from October until February when our store was exhausted and we could do no more.

The Government stepped in and took control of all the grain in the country in order to ensure a fair distribution. We had at that time about 120 people—schoolchildren and permanent employees—to feed every day, and normally used a 2-cwt sack of grain per day. We were allotted ten sacks per month, one third of our usual consumption, and so had to make a proportionate reduction in the food bowl. But there was no question of the Shilluk schoolboy being thankful for small mercies in receiving a little every day whilst his less fortunate parents and brothers and sisters at home got nothing. There were protest meetings among the boys generally followed by an indignant procession carrying the meagrely filled bowls so that the Father—myself—who in their eyes was responsible for this shortage could see for himself the result of his gross neglect in not cornering the entire grain supply for their benefit. In vain I pointed out that the famine was no fault of mine and that they were better off than their brethren in the village. They replied in effect that such arguments were beside the point. Since they had done me the favour of coming to the mission to be fed, clothed, housed—and incidentally taught—for nothing, the least I could do in return was to see that the feeding was adequate, and since I had so obviously failed in this respect,